

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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AMEMBASSY OSLO
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USEEC AND AMEMBASSY

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT,SP
SUBJ: ARREST OF SOCIALIST DEPUTY PRODUCES PARLIAMENTARY RHUBARB

SUMMARY: THE ARREST AND ALLEGED MISTREATMENT OF A PSOE
DEPUTY IN SANTANDER ON AUGUST 27 HAS BALLOONED INTO A
FULL-FLEDGED RHUBARB WITH PSOE (AND TO A LESSER EXTEN
PCE) LEADERS TALKING OF THE RESIGNATION OF INTERIOR
MINISTER MARTIN VILLA. END SUMMARY.

1. AS POLICE TELL THE STORY, AND AUTHORIZED DEMONSTRATION
IN SANTANDER FOR REGIONAL AUTONOMY HAD ENDED ABOUT 2130
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ON AUGUST 27 WHEN ONE INDIVIDUAL BEGAN WAVING A REPUBLICAN
FLAG AND CHANTING, "TOMORROW SPAIN WILL BE REPUBLICAN".
IN ATTEMPTING TO ARREST HIM, A POLICEMAN WAS SLIGHTLY
INJURED. AT THIS POINT PSOE DEPUTY TO THE CORTES
(PARLIAMENT) JAIME BLANCO GARCIA INTERVENED, ALLEGEDLY
WITHOUT IDENTIFYING HIMSELF. AS A RESULT, HE AND
SEVERAL COMPANIONS WERE TAKEN TO THE NEARBY POLICE

BARRACKS. THERE HE IDENTIFIED HIMSELF AND POLICE INFORMED THE LOCAL CIVIL GOVERNOR, WHO IMMEDIATELY ORDERED HIS SET FREE. BLANCO WAS SUBSEQUENTLY CHARGED WITH "INSULT AND AGGRESSION" AGAINST THE POLICE OFFICERS, WHILE HE IN TURN CHARGED THE POLICE WITH "AGGRESSION AND BAD TREATMENT".

2. AS SR. BLANCO TELLS IT, HE OBSERVED THE POLICE BEATING UP A YOUNG MAN IN THE STREET. HE APPROACHED, PROPERLY IDENTIFIED HIMSELF, BUT WAS HIMSELF BEATEN, INSULTED, AND ESCORTED TO THE POLICE BARRACKS. HE REPORTEDLY HAS BOTH BRUISES AND WITNESSES TO BACK HIM UP.

3. BLANCO'S STORY, IF TRUE, REPRESENTS A CLEAR VIOLATION OF PARLIAMENTARY IMMUNITY. EVEN SOME UCD LEADERS ARE REPORTEDLY DISTURBED. A PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE (ON ONE UCD AND ONE PSOE REPRESENTATIVE) HAS BEEN APPOINTED TO INVESTIGATE, AND IS NOW IN SANTANDER. PSOE SPOKESMAN ENRIQUE MUGICA HAS CALLED IN ADDITION FOR A PLENARY SESSION OF THE CORTES TO DEBATE THE ISSUE. INTERIOR MINISTER MARTIN VILLA, WHO IS ULTIMATELY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE BEHAVIOR OF THE POLICE, HAS MET WITH (GUTIERREZ MELLADO, FIRST VP AND ACTING PRIME MINISTER DURING SUZREZ'S EUROPEAN TRIP, TO EXPLAIN THE OCCURRENCE. CALLS HAVE ALREADY BEEN HEARD--ESPECIALLY FROM PSOE

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LEADERS--FOR MARTIN VILLA'S RESIGNATION IF THE CHARGES PROVE TRUE. ON AUGUST 30 HE TOLD THE PRESS HE WAS PREPARED TO RESIGN "IF IT WERE NECESSARY" (WE DOUBT THAT HE MEANT, HIS COMMENT TO IMPLY HE WAS REALLY THINKING OF RESIGNING.)

4. THE POLICE VERSION MAY PROVE TRUE, BUT THEIR RECORD DOES NOT INSPIRE CONFIDENCE, ESPECIALLY IN NORTHERN SPAIN AND WHEN DEALING WITH PERSONS LOOKING LIKE DEPUTY BLANCO, WHO IS ONLY 33 AND SPORTS A HEAVY BEARD. FOR ITS PART, THE PSOE HAS LONG COMPLAINED, WITH SOME JUSTICE, THAT SOME POLICE ELEMENTS REMAIN AUTHORITARIAN, ANTI-LEFTIST, AND SOMETIMES VIOLENT. THE PRESIDENTS OF BOTH THE CORTES AND THE CONGRESS OF DEPUTIES HAVE ALREADY INVOLVED THEMSELVES DIRECTLY IN THE CASE, AND IT IS EXPECTED THAT THE SUBSEQUENT AIRING OF THIS AFFAIR IN PARLIAMENT MAY LEAD TO UPDATED AND BETTER DEFINED GROUND RULES WITH RESPECT TO PARLIAMENTARY IMMUNITY, AND TO JUST WHAT POINT A CORTES MEMBER CAN INVOLVE HIMSELF IN STREET DEMONSTRATIONS WITHOUT LOSING SUCH IMMUNITY.

5. PSOE LEADERS ARE APPARENTLY TRYING TO USE THIS CASE AS A

LEVER--OR A STICK IF YOU WILL--TO EXACERBATE WHAT THEY CONSIDER LATENT TENSIONS WITHIN UCD AND TO SECURE THE DISMISSAL OF MARTIN VILLA, WHOM THEY IDENTIFY AS THE PRINCIPAL CULPRIT IN THE GOVERNMENT'S PRE-ELECTION EFFORTS TO FASHION A "MANAGEABLE" CENTER-LEFT THROUGH SUCH MEASURES AS THE LEGALIZATION OF THE PSOE "HSITORICAL" FACTION. IN THE PROCESS THEY WOULD HOPE TO RAISE THE LEVEL OF CONSCIOUSNESS ABOUT THE CONTINUATION OF OLD PRACTICES BY PUBLIC ORDER FORCES AND TO FORCE A DEGREE OF POLICE REFORM.

6. DURING LUNCH WITH THE AMBASSADOR AUGUST 31,
MINISTER IGNACIO CAMUNAS (RELATIONS WITH CORTES) DOWN-
PLAYED THE WHOLE AFFIAR. HE NOTED THAT INASMUCH AS IT
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WAS A FIRST CASE INVOLVING PARLIAMENTARY IMMUNITY OF THE NEWLY ELECTED CORTES, IT WAS CAUSING UNDUE EXCITEMENT IN THE PRESS. HE DOUBTED THERE WOULD BE ANYTHING AS DRAMATIC AS MARTIN VILLA'S RESIGNATION, CONCLUDING THAT THE MATTER WAS IN THE PROCESS OF BEING WORKED OUT. HE ADMITTED GOVERNMENT'S CONTINUING PROBLEMS IN GAINING FULL CONTROL OF PUBLIC ORDER FORCES. STABLER

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